

CD 2013--19



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2012-13
season

University of Toronto Wind Ensemble

Gillian MacKay, conductor

Friday, February 8, 2013
7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre
Edward Johnson Building

Wind Ensemble
Feb 8, 2013 (Sched. date)
Perf Monday Feb 11, 2013

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CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL (B. 1956)
***L'homme armé, Variations for Wind Ensemble* (2007)**

Christopher Marshall was born in Paris, grew up and was educated in Australia and New Zealand, and is currently Head of Composition at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. A composer of orchestral, wind ensemble, chamber and choral music, Mr. Marshall writes works which are described as accessible and exhilarating, emphasizing expressive memorable melodies. Although he has a Master of Music degree, he describes himself as a "self-taught" composer, and says that he believes that the foundation of his musical style is "a strong belief that music is primarily a means of expressive communication with an audience."

L'homme armé is a 15th century melody that was used as part of over 40 Mass cycles between 1450 and the end of the 17th century. Composer Christopher Marshall had three vastly different ideas in mind when writing his variations on this tune – war, inspiration and drinking. Writing the work prior to and during the war in Iraq, Marshall tries to express some of his feelings toward what he calls "the institution of war". Knowing that the melody was the inspiration for many musical compositions before his own, he also wanted to suggest some of the styles and techniques of his musical predecessors. Finally, the origins of the tune were secular and may have been used as a drinking song, so Marshall includes variations that highlight "enjoyment and exuberance".

The structure of the work itself is one of the oldest in music – a theme and variations. After a bold introduction featuring a siren sound played on trombones, Marshall presents a clear statement of the *L'homme armé* theme. The theme is followed by fifteen variations

which take on characters related to his three overarching ideas. Some of his characters include an old soldier reminiscing in a smoky bar, and a Maori warrior performing a war chant or haka. All lead to an energetic finale. Christopher Marshall ends his writing on the piece saying, "I discovered the following curious quotation...Extrema gaudii luctus occupant – the extremes of joy can ward off sorrow. Perhaps one antidote to the sorrows of war can be found in the art and joy of music".

JOHN MACKEY (B. 1973)
***Concerto for Soprano Sax and Wind Ensemble* (2007)**

American composer John Mackey received his education at the Cleveland Institute and the Juilliard School, where he developed a special interest in writing music for dance and symphonic winds. His works have been heard internationally including at the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. Mackey has received commissions from a diverse range of ensembles including the Cleveland Youth Orchestra, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company and even the U.S Olympic Synchronized Swim Team.

The *Concerto for Soprano Sax and Wind Ensemble* had its premiere on October 23, 2007 by the Dallas Wind Symphony with soloist Dan Fabian. Mackey sees the saxophone as a hybrid instrument and in this work sets out to answer the question, "What is the sax made of?" Constructed of brass (metal), felt (the padding material under the saxophone's keys), and wood (the reed that vibrates to make the sound), the saxophone can find a correlation with every group of instruments in the wind ensemble. Mackey makes these connections in the inner movements of the concerto.

Prelude: In this movement, the composer foreshadows some of the ideas that will be developed in the rest of the concerto. In his program note, he does add that “if you hear absolutely nothing you will be in the “Prelude,” you may be in for a long night”.

Felt: For the second movement of the concerto, the composer poses a second question: “What can the saxophone do?” This movement explores the connection with the woodwind instruments of the ensemble – the keys. Mackey writes passages requiring quick finger movements and even asks the soloist to play the same notes using alternate fingerings, thus giving a slightly different tone colour to the same pitch. Part of his answer to the question posed by this second movement is “the sax can play some weird sounds”, so he includes some pitch bending where the soloist produces different pitches with only minimal movements of the fingers.

Metal: Paired mainly with the brass and metal percussion instruments, this

movement shows off another aspect of the saxophone’s capability – the lovely lyrical high register of the instrument.

Wood: The woodwind instruments, along with the piano, harp, double bass and marimba which all have wooden components, accompany the soloist in this tango movement of the concerto.

Finale: This movement starts with a quote from the Clarinet Concerto by John Corigliano, one of John Mackey’s composition teachers, who was himself quoting the Italian composer Giovanni Gabrieli. The conclusion to his concerto is both a tribute to his teacher and to the virtuoso capabilities of the saxophone. Again to quote the composer, here is evidence that “the sax can play some monster-difficult stuff”.

We’re delighted this evening to welcome soloist Evan Mounce, winner of last year’s Wind Bands Concerto Competition.

Program Notes by Lisa Jack



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the Faculty of Music website:
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